

STATINTL

Fulbright Opposed U.S. Blow at Cuba

WASHINGTON (AP)—Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, raised strong objections to a U.S.-backed invasion of Cuba in a memorandum to President Kennedy in March, 1961, shortly before the Bay of Pigs disaster.

The communication was published for the first time in a book out Wednesday, "Fulbright of Arkansas." It is a collection of the Senator's papers and speeches, edited by Karl E. Meyer, editorial writer for the Washington Post.

Fulbright's argument was that the United States would get such a moral black eye, and set off such public reaction south of the Rio Grande, that the result would be a net loss for this country even if Fidel Castro's Communist regime were successfully erased as a base for subversive organization and money.

"FOR THE UNITED States to overthrow Castro behind a facade of Cuba exiles would merely add fuel to the appeal of Castroism," Fulbright wrote. "Such an action would be denounced from the Rio Grande to Patagonia as an example of imperialism. We would undoubtedly also confront a serious situation in the UN."

Fulbright's preference was for an effort to insulate and isolate Castro from the rest of Latin America.

Expanding on that point, he wrote to Kennedy:

"Whether we like it or not, we are in truth engaged in a kind of competitive coexistence with Castro to see whose system can produce reform and progress more quickly."

FULBRIGHT expressed doubt, moreover, that the Cuban revolutionary front, slated to take over once Castro was overthrown, was led by men equal to the task they would inherit. A major weakness, he contended, was the absence of such left-of-center leaders as Puerto Rico's Gov. Luis Munoz Marin, President Romulo Betancourt of Venezuela or former president Alberto Lleras Camargo of Colombia.

Fulbright is described as the only participant, in a key meeting called by Kennedy April 4, 1961, who opposed invasion on both moral and practical grounds. The invasion effort began April 17.

But when Kennedy disclosed the presence of Soviet aggressive armaments in Cuba last October, Fulbright is reported to have been an advocate of invasion rather than the more restrained blockade supported by the administration.